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**CONTENTS**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| A Folklore Survey of Dickson County, Tennessee ..... | 57 |
| Seven Comic Tennessee Songs .....                    | 72 |
| Events and Comments .....                            | 84 |

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## A FOLKLORE SURVEY OF DICKSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

By

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Dickson, Tennessee

Dickson County was organized in 1804, having been created by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee convening in Knoxville in 1803. At that time Knoxville was the capital of the state and John Sevier was governor.

Dickson county was formed from parts of Montgomery and Robertson Counties. It included what is now Hickman County and a part of Cheatham and Houston Counties. It was named for William Dickson, who was a member of Congress. The county is 620 square miles in area, is about 875 feet above sea level, and is drained by the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers.

There is evidence of the presence of white men in the county as early as 1786. Proof is in the military land grants which were issued by the governor of North Carolina for services rendered in the continental war.

Settlements in this territory were first made about 1793, when a large body of land was granted by the State of North Carolina to Robert Bill. Some deeds for the land were proved before Andrew Jackson, one of the judges of the Superior Court of Law.

A few of the people who settled on Joneses Creek were Malton Dickson, James Martin, and James Steele from North Carolina, and John Larkins from South Carolina.

In 1806, the first county seat was located and named Charlotte. Charlotte is still the county seat of Dickson County. It was the only town in the county until after the Civil War. The other towns in the county now are Dickson, Burns, White Bluff, Tennessee City, Sylvia, and Slayden.

From its beginning, Dickson County has made tremendous progress. It is now one of the more progressive counties in the middle Tennessee area. Although the citizens consider themselves modern people in a modern age, they still cling to traditions of their ancestors. There is evidence that many of the traditions, beliefs, and sayings of these early settlers are with the people today. The writer has tried to make a partial folklore profile of Dickson County. The profile is composed of the folklore the people remember, believe, or practice today. This includes weather proverbs, remedies and cures, proverbs, bad luck superstitions, and good luck superstitions.

"The essential quality of folklore is that it is traditional. Persons whose lives are most affected by a folkloristic point of view see no virtue in originality. The old is always authoritative and is accepted without question because of its age. Weather is predicted by ancient proverbs, diseases are treated by methods learned from old people rather than from the hospital, crops are planted in the light or dark of the moon, not as advised in the agricultural bulletin."<sup>1</sup>

The following material is the collection the writer has made from the interviews with people in Dickson County.<sup>2</sup>

### Signs of General Bad Luck<sup>3</sup>

The most popular bad luck superstitions that the writer found are those that revolve around the black cat. Herb Daniels, writing in the Chicago Tribune, says, "Superstitions and cats go together. There is no agreement as to whether kitty is good or bad luck. It's lucky to own a black cat, unlucky to meet a strange one--unless you are leaving church just after your wedding. Then it means good luck on the theory that the worst has already happened. Worst of all, if you're the first person a cat looks on after licking herself you are doomed to an early marriage."<sup>4</sup>

The writer found that the people of Dickson County look on the black cat as a sign of bad luck, and not one person mentioned the cat as a sign of good luck.

1. If a black cat crosses the road in front of a person, he is certain to have bad luck.
2. If one starts somewhere and a black cat crosses his path, before going ahead the person should turn his hat around or he will have bad luck.
3. If one is going somewhere and a black cat crosses the road in front of him, he should turn around and go back or he will have bad luck.

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1. Joseph T. Shipley, Dictionary of World Literature (New York, 1943), p. 244.

2. The writer wishes to express her appreciation to the following people for their help in collecting the data in this paper: Ruth Johnson Forehand, Tommy Forehand, Norma Ashley, Anne Miller, Charles E. Miller, Aline Miller, Bessie Greer, Eleanora Miller, Lula Wright, Rebecca Wyburn, Lynn Canady, Lawrence Miller, Mrs. H. J. Hooper, Marian Matthews, Sarah Underhill, Helen Wyatt, Anne Dunlop, Howell Smith, Kitty Petty, Alice Gilliam, Sue Ladd, Elizabeth D. Johnson, Margaret Johnson, Henslee Lampley, Maggie Lampley, Tishue Adams, Ozelle Adams, John Adams, Martha G. Thornton, Rebecca Lewis, Virginia Perry, Doris Lewis, Alex C. Wade, Nellie Baker, Julia Estes, and Bessie Olephant.

3. For signs of specific bad and good fortune, see the sections on "Miscellaneous Beliefs and Practices" and "Sickness and Death."

4. Herb Daniels, "The Modern Almanac," Chicago Tribune, November 6, 1955.

The next most frequently mentioned superstitions were, "Break a mirror and seven years bad luck will come," and "A two dollar bill is a sign of bad luck."

The following additional bad luck superstitions were collected in Dickson County:

1. When a person sees one buzzard which does not flap its wings, he is going to have bad luck.
2. Do not let a woman enter a house on New Year's day before a darkhaired man.
3. It is bad luck to leave a Christmas tree or Christmas decorations up after New Year's day.
4. If one forgets something and goes back to get it, he must sit down or he will have bad luck.
5. It is bad luck for a person to pick up a pin that has its head pointed toward him.
6. It is bad luck to walk with one shoe on and one shoe off.
7. If one hears a dog howl at night, it is a sign of bad luck.
8. If one hears a hen crow, it is a sign of bad luck.
9. Never carry a broom when moving from one house to another.
10. It is bad luck to carry sharp objects into the house unless they are carried out the same door.
11. It is considered bad luck to get a haircut in March.
12. Friday the 13th is an unlucky day.
13. It is considered bad luck for a person to break into a funeral procession.
14. It is considered a sign of bad luck for a person to step across another person's feet.
15. It is a sign of bad luck for someone to sing at the table.
16. It is a sign of bad luck to sing before breakfast.
17. When in a cemetery it is bad luck to step over a grave.
18. There is an old superstition to the effect that it is bad luck for a person to set out a weeping willow tree because it is said that when the tree is large enough to shade a grave the person who planted it will die.
19. It is bad luck to eat with thirteen people at the table. Thirteen is generally considered a bad luck number. This superstition is said to go back to the time of the Last Supper when Christ broke bread with the Twelve Apostles, one of whom was a traitor.
20. It is bad luck to pick up a comb after it is dropped.
21. It is bad luck to break a chain letter.
22. It is considered unlucky for a person to "brag" about some good fortune unless he "knocks on wood."
23. If a bird gets into the house where a wedding shower is in progress, it is a sign of bad luck.
24. When unwrapping gifts at a bridal shower the ribbon should not be broken.
25. It is considered bad luck for a bride to see her husband-to-be prior to the ceremony on her wedding day.
26. It is a bad luck sign to walk under a ladder. The reason this superstition came into being was that breaking a "triangle" (a symbol of the Trinity) was thought to be bad luck.



27. It is considered bad luck to lay one's hat on the bed.
28. It is considered bad luck to raise an umbrella in the house.
29. It is an indication of bad luck to spin a chair on one of its legs.
30. It is considered bad luck to light three cigarettes from one match.
31. It is considered bad luck to spill salt. This superstition is said to have originated at the Last Supper.
32. It is bad luck to take up ashes on Friday.
33. It is bad luck to find a five-leaf clover.
34. When two or more people are walking down the street they should go around the same side of an object. If they do not, bad luck will occur unless one says, "Bread and butter, come to supper."
35. It is bad luck to cut out a dress unless it can be finished before Monday.
36. To kill a spider is a sign of bad luck.
37. To shake the tablecloth after sundown is bad luck.
38. It is bad luck to burn sassafras wood.
39. It is bad luck to step over a broom.
40. If one puts his left shoe on first he will have bad luck.
41. To postpone a wedding is a sign of bad luck.
42. It is considered bad luck to wear an opal unless it is a person's birthstone.

#### Signs of General Good Luck

It seems that there were not as many tokens, charms, or beliefs relating to good luck among the people as there were bad luck superstitions.

The most popular of the good luck superstitions center around the "rabbit foot," and the horseshoe. According to Mrs. H. J. Hooper of Nashville, Tennessee, not just any rabbit foot will do. She says: "It must be the right front foot of a rabbit caught in a graveyard."

It seems that any part of a horseshoe will bring good luck. Some suggest that one-half of a horseshoe will work as effectively as a whole one. Also there are a few people who believe that it is necessary to spit on the horseshoe and throw it over the left shoulder. To hang up a horseshoe with its prongs upward is to ward off the evil spirits in the surrounding areas.

#### Love and Marriage Superstitions

If an unmarried girl will take a mirror on the first day of May at twelve o'clock and hold it over a well, she will see her husband-to-be. This superstition is very popular in Dickson County.

Other superstitions relating to love and marriage are as follows:

1. Marry in black, wish you were back;  
Marry in pink, love a sink;  
Marry in white, your love is all right;  
Marry in blue, your love is true.
2. After one has completed a quilt, put a cat in the center of it. Let four people hold up the corners and shake the quilt. The person the cat jumps out by will marry first.
3. The girl who catches the bridal bouquet will be next in the bridal party to marry.
4. If one burns the letter of someone who loves him, he will destroy that person's love.
5. If one pares an apple in one long string and throws the paring down, it will form the initial letter of his love.
6. When a girl marries she should wear something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue, with a sixpence in her shoe.
7. Happy is the bride the sun shines on.
8. The person who presented the first gift opened at a bridal shower will be the next to wed.
9. If one finds a mullein plant gone to seed, partially breaks it and turns it toward the direction of someone he loves, and if it grows in this direction then the person returns his or her love.
10. Sitting on a table is a sign a person wants to get married.
11. "Stump your toe. Kiss your thumb and see your beau."

### Wishes

The most popular superstition associated with wishes is the one that Ruth Johnson Forehand of Burns, Tennessee, related to the writer. She says, "A person who eats the meat from the wishbone of a chicken may select someone with whom to break this bone. When they break this bone each of them must make a wish. The person getting the longest piece will gain his wish, and the person who gets the shortest piece will be the first to wed."

Mrs. Forehand recalls that as a child she heard that if you made a wish and let the Bible fall open, if it falls open to a place where the Bible says, "It comes to pass," the wish will come true.

Other notions of this type are as follows:

1. When one sees a load of freshly mown hay, make a wish and it will come true.
2. When one sees a redbird sitting, make a wish. If the bird flies to the right the wish will come true. If the bird flies to the left the wish will not materialize.
3. Find a horseshoe and make a wish. Throw the horseshoe over the left shoulder and the wish will come true.
4. When one hears the first whipperwill call, make a wish and roll over three times. The wish will come true.

5. See a white house. Make a wish, and then kiss the thumb. Place the thumb in the palm of the other hand, then hit the fist in the hand.

6. If the hem of a dress or skirt is turned up, kiss it and make a wish. The wish will come true.

7. Count the stars in the big dipper every night for several nights, then make a wish and it will come true.

8. Wish on a falling star and the wish will come true.

### Sickness and Death

1. If one first sees the new moon through a bush, it is a sign of sickness in the family.

2. If one dreams of a wedding, there will be a death in the family.

3. If a hen crows, one member of the family is sure to die.

4. A picture falling means a death in the family.

5. When one plants a weeping willow tree and it grows to his height, he or some member of his family will die.

6. Hearing a rooster crow after sundown is a sign of death.

7. If one sets out a cedar tree, when it gets large enough to shade his grave he will die.

8. Sneezing at the table is a sign of death.

9. If a person hears a noise and cannot find where it comes from, it is a sign of death in the family.

10. One should not bring a shovel or a hoe into the house because his grave will be dug with them.

11. When one hears a stray dog howling, it is a sign someone will die.

### Cures and Remedies

The largest number of remedies and cures that were gathered were for the common cold and for the removal of the wart. In addition to these, however, there were remedies for everything from itch, to nose bleeding, asthma, poison oak, whooping cough, and measles.

Miss Bessie Greer of Charlotte, Tennessee, recommends rubbing warts with green beans' leaves. Another way that she recommends is, "Pick the wart until it bleeds, wipe the blood on a dishrag, and bury the dishrag under the doorstep. When the rag rots the wart will disappear."

Eleanora Miller of Charlotte suggests the following cure. She says, "When the moon is full, look at it, rub the wart slowly and say: 'moon, with thy decrease take away this, thy increase,' and if one fully believes this the wart will leave." She also gives the remedy of applying the juice from a milkweed on the wart for five days in succession.

Other suggested remedies are as follows:

1. Steal a dirty dishrag and rub the wart. Bury the dishrag and when the rag rots the wart will go away.
2. Rub a dead cat against the wart and bury the cat in the graveyard at midnight.
3. Pick a wart until it bleeds on a grain of corn, feed the corn to a black chicken. The wart will leave the person and go to the chicken.
4. Rub the wart with the skin from a chicken gizzard, and bury the skin. The wart will be removed.
5. Go to a graveyard in the middle of the night and back up to a stump that has water in it. The person must stick his finger into this water and say, "Barley corn, barley corn; injury mill short; stump water, stump water; swallow this wart."

In the case of the common cold there seemed to be very little magic involved. The cures resemble recipes that have passed down from one generation to the next.

Mrs. Tisha Adams, a colored lady who is seventy-one years old and lives in Dickson says: "For colds and cough boil for several hours mullein leaves, bark from the north side of a cherry tree, and bark from the north side of an oak tree. This will make a syrup. Take this syrup when you cough." She also suggested the following recipe for a chest cold. "Melt mutton suet, and add one drop of turpentine; put this on a flannel cloth. Place this warm flannel cloth on the chest. There have been some suggestions that Vicks salve and quinine are good to add to this tallow and turpentine."

Mrs. Ozelle Dixon, a niece of Mrs. Adams, says: "For a sore throat, peel and scrape Irish potato and salt it. Place this in a cloth and put the cloth around your throat."

For severe nosebleeds the folk remedies include holding a dime in the roof of the mouth, holding scissors to the back of the neck, reading or repeating Ezekiel 16:6, holding key to back of neck, and wearing a penny around the neck.

There is a variety of remedies used in connection with children's diseases:

1. To prevent whooping cough, swallow a live minnow.
2. To get relief from whooping cough, cough in the mouth of a live catfish.
3. Give catnip tea to babies for colic.
4. For children who have worms, hang three or four garlic bulbs around their necks.
5. To help children cut their teeth, hang a mole's foot on a string around their neck.
6. Give browned flour for stomach pains.
7. A string of beads made from elderberries will keep babies well during their second summer.
8. Wear any type turpentine string around the toe for any type of sore toe.
9. Break open jaw bone of a hog and get marrow to rub on throat when it is sore.
10. For measles boil red corncobs and make tea from them. Drink it ice cold.



11. If a baby has the phthisic cut a limb from a sourwood tree and measure the baby. The limb must be the exact length of the baby. Hide the limb where no one can find it, and the baby will surely be cured.

12. An old cure for a baby with the thrush is to wipe the baby's mouth out with oak leaves.

13. A woman who has never seen her father can blow her breath into a baby's mouth and cure the thrush.

14. Wear a piece of asafetida around the neck, and it will prevent any type of disease.

It seems that to prevent rheumatism it is believed a person must carry something in his pocket such as a nutmeg, a potato, or a buckeye. Another suggestion is to wear a piece of copper wire around the leg.

Mrs. Lizzie Johnson of Burns, Tennessee, gave me the following recipe for making a pacifier: "Cream sugar, butter, and bread crumbs together. Soak mixture in some milk, tie in a cloth, give to baby to suck on."

Other remedies are as follows:

1. An old cure for kidney trouble is for the sick person to drink "watermelon seed tea." To make this tea, boil watermelon seeds in water for several minutes.

2. In the spring take sulphur and molasses to "perk" up a person's health.

3. Put a pan of water under the bed to cure a person of night sweats.

4. Give catnip tea to break out hives.

5. Mix sulphur, hog lard, and turpentine together to cure seven year itch.

6. Take tea made from mullein leaves to cure swelling in the joints.

7. Drink sassafras tea in the springtime to thin the blood.

8. To relieve a boil, place a crushed leaf of a Jimson weed on it.

9. Place chewed tobacco on a wasp sting to keep the swelling down.

10. Rub a gold ring until it is hot and place it on a sty. The sty will go away.

11. To cure a sty, go to a crossroad and say, "Sty, sty, leave my eye; catch the next one that does come by."

12. Take red clay mud and mix with apple vinegar until stiff. Spread this ointment on a sprain to reduce swelling.

13. Take leaves from a bush called the "devil's" bush, and boil these leaves with pure hog lard. This makes a good salve for cuts and sores.

14. For asthma, take three tablespoons of pure cow butter, one-half cup of vinegar, two tablespoons of sugar, one-half teaspoon of ginger, and one-half teaspoon of nutmeg. Place these ingredients in a skillet and boil until thick. Drink this while it is hot.

15. To cure a crick in the neck, soak brown paper in vinegar and place about the neck.

16. To cure poison oak, mix one teaspoon of copperas in one-half cup of vinegar. Bathe the rash in this mixture.

17. To cure poison oak, mix one-half cup of sweet milk and two teaspoons of gun powder. Rub this solution on the rash.

18. For a fever, take a few drops of turpentine, remembering not to take more drops than one is years old.
19. Chew "shank" roots for diarrhea.
20. For an earache, take a drop of blood from a "betsy-bug" and drop in the ear.
21. Rub ear wax on a fever blister to cure it.
22. Blow pipe smoke in the ear to stop an earache.
23. For treating a sprained ankle, boil bark from a red oak tree and mullein leaves. Apply this to the ankle.
24. Place a piece of fat pork on an infection to draw out poison.

### Signs of the Zodiac, and Related Omens

There are many superstitions that are associated with the moon. It seems that many of the "oldtimers," and incidentally many of the farmers of today, believe in them.

It seems that the potatoes will go to vine if they are not planted in the dark of the moon, or that the corn will go to stalk if it is not planted in the dark of the moon. Beans will not grow unless they are planted on Good Friday. To have a good crop of water-melons, the seeds must be planted before breakfast on the first day of May.

To produce large turnips the seeds must be planted in the dark of the moon; however, if one wants lots of "sallet," plant the seeds in the light of the moon. Another belief is that the seeds should be planted on the sixth day of August.

Almost all the farmers say that the best time to plant crops is in the light of the moon. When the first whippoorwill calls it is time to plant corn regardless of the moon. Other signs are as follows:

1. Do not plant beans when the sign is in the flowers.
2. Plant cucumbers when the sign is in the twins.
3. Plant flowers when the sign is in the virgin.
4. Plant or reset shrubbery during the new moon in November or March.
5. Peonies should be set while the moon is new in March.
6. When dogwood blooms in spring it is time to plant cotton.
7. If the sun rises clear on Christmas morning it is a sign of a good fruit crop the next year.

The "oldtimers" observed certain signs for operations or surgery. The sign should be in the hips or legs and going down, or it should be above the heart. The sign should never be in the heart, else there will be severe bleeding.

To "lighten" or alter hogs or cattle the sign should be below the knees. There will be no excess bleeding if this is observed.

When one digs potatoes, he should dig when the sign is in the hips and going down.

If the sign is in the body the potatoes will rot.

Do not cut toenails while the sign is in the foot.

### Weather Superstitions

Many of the folklore signs and superstitions of the weather that follow were given to the writer by Mrs. Elizabeth Dillard Johnson. Mrs. Johnson, or "Miss Lizzie," is a resident of Burns, Tennessee, in Dickson County. She was born August 27, 1879.

"Miss Lizzie" said that "According to the old people, the first twelve days of a new year rule the twelve months; that is, the type of weather on each of the days indicates the weather to be experienced during the month which that day rules. For example, if the third day is bright, sunny, and clear, March will be a good month."

She also recalls the old Indian saying, "If the moon is hung right, no hunt that month because you could hang your horn on it, but if hung so as to drip water, indicates rain and good hunt."

Other superstitions are as follows:

1. If the ground hog sees his shadow on February 2nd there will be forty days of bad weather.
2. If one hears a rain crow there will be falling weather within twenty-four hours.
3. When rocks are damp in the morning there will be rain soon.
4. Fire popping is a sign of snow in the air.
5. When crickets and frogs stop "hollering" and it is cloudy there is going to be a storm.
6. When doves start to "holler" it is going to rain.
7. When smoke settles to the ground it is a certain sign of falling weather.
8. Heavy shuck on corn is a sure sign of a cold winter.
9. Whatever day the first snow of the year comes on, there will be that many snows that year.
10. If one cow licks another cow's back, it is a sign of falling weather.
11. First robin seen is a sign of spring.
12. If it clouds up on a frost there will be bad weather in twenty-four hours.
13. Friday is either the "fairest" or the "foulest" day of the week.
14. New moon standing on end is a sign of dry weather; lying on its back, it is a sign of wet weather.
15. Every time it thunders in February there will be that many frosts in May.
16. When katy-dids start "hollerin'," it is three months until frost.
17. Rain that begins at ten will just begin, but rain at two will show what it will do.
18. Rain before seven will quit before eleven.
19. A rooster that crows when he goes to bed will get up with a wet head.
20. A rainbow in the morning, sailors take warning; a rainbow at night is sailors' delight.

21. If it rains the first day of the month, it will rain fifteen days that month.
22. A ring around the moon with one star in it is a sign it will rain within twenty-four hours.
23. When the stars are dim, rain is near.
24. When corns are painful, it is a sure sign of rain.
25. Red clouds at night, sailors' delight; red clouds in the morning, sailors' warning.
26. Dust whirlwind is a sign of rain.
27. To eat everything on the table for supper is a sign that tomorrow will be clear.
28. When it is raining and the sun is shining, it will rain the same time tomorrow.
29. Lightning in the north is a sign of rain within forty-eight hours.
30. We shall have a snow for every fog in August.
31. Kill a snake and if it flops over with its "belly" toward the sky it will rain within twenty-four hours.
32. All signs fail in dry weather.
33. If March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb. If it comes in like a lamb, it will go out like a lion.
34. Heavy growth of fur on animals indicates a coming hard winter.
35. If the sun goes down behind a cloud on Sunday night, there will be a rain before Saturday night.
36. When the old sow rakes up leaves to make her bed, it will turn cold that night.
37. Old people believed that lightning would not strike in the same place twice; also, that it would not strike in the vicinity of feathers.
38. It is a sign of rain when the stars of the big dipper are posed in the sky in a pouring position.
39. A stormy October 31st foretells three months of calm weather.
40. When wild geese and ducks go South, that is a sign of cold weather.
41. If it thunders in the winter time, it will snow within nine days.
42. If the sun rises clear and goes behind a cloud before seven, it is a good sign of rain.
43. When there is a circle about the moon, count the stars within the circle, and there will be that many days to pass before bad weather begins.
44. When the sun's rays are clearly evident in the sky, as if drawing water, this is said to be a sign of rain.
45. When one sees the squirrels storing an abundance of food he may expect an unusually hard winter.
46. There will be no rain when dew falls.
47. When the chickens come out to scratch, it's a sign the rain is over.
48. When wasps and hornets build their nests up high, it is a sign of a cold winter.
49. The way the wind blows on January 1, it will not be out of that direction for more than forty-eight hours, for forty days.
50. When butchering hogs, if the little end of the melt comes out first, the winter is past; if the big end comes first the worst of the winter is still to come.
51. When hornets build low in trees, there will be lots of winds and cyclones.
52. When leaves turn glossy and twist upside-down, it is going to rain.
53. When springs go below their usual level, it is going to rain.



## Miscellaneous Signs, Beliefs and Practices

1. If one sings when he goes to bed, he will wake up crying.
2. When whippoorwills begin to sing in the spring, it is time for the men to begin chopping stove wood.
3. Do not say "thank you" for a flower cutting or it will not live.
4. Left hand itches, one will get money.
5. Right hand itches, one will shake hands with a stranger.
6. If a person's foot itches, he is going to walk on strange ground.
7. If one hears of one fire, he will hear of two more.
8. Whatever one is doing in the spring when he hears the first dove "hollering," that is what he will be doing the next year.
9. The dropping of a dishrag while washing dishes is a sign that someone is coming.
10. A rooster crowing near the house is a sign of company.
11. Two people who make the same statement at the same time should crook their little fingers together and say:

"Needle, pins, rooster, hen,  
What goes up the chimney? Smoke.  
Make this wish and never go broke.

Turn the fingers loose now.

12. Do not tell a dream before breakfast because it will come true.
13. Do not start a job on Friday unless it can be finished.
14. Do not let a child look in a mirror until it is a year old.
15. If it rains the first day of June, there will be no grapes that year.
16. A whistling woman and a crowing hen will surely come to some bad end.
17. When one starts somewhere he should never turn around and go back. If he does have to return, he should spit in his tracks.
18. If one has a tooth pulled and throws it out where a dog will step on it, he will have a dog tooth.
19. If one has a leg or foot cramp at night, he should turn his shoes bottom-side-up.
20. If the teakettle is boiling over, point the forefinger at it and it will stop boiling.
21. If there is thunder on the fourth of July, the grapes will drop off.
22. A job that is started on Friday is never finished.
23. A man who has his suspenders twisted in the back will not be struck by lightning.
24. Find a hairpin and one will find a new friend.
25. If a baby's first word is "da-da" then the next baby will be a boy.
26. If a person has his hair cut in March, he will have a headache all year.
27. When one goes to bed he should place his shoes side-by-side so that he will not walk in his sleep.
28. Do not trim a baby's fingernails or toenails until after the baby is a year old or the baby will die.
29. If the first guest on New Year's day is a man, the chickens will be roosters; if the first guest is a woman, the chickens will be pullets.
30. Long eggs will hatch roosters; round eggs will hatch pullets.

31. If one pulls a tooth and does not put his tongue in the place where the tooth was pulled, a gold one will come in its place.

32. If one wants his dog to stay at home, cut his tail off and place it under the doorstep.

33. In early days at corn huskings, the boy who found a red ear of corn could claim a kiss from the lady of his choice.

34. Turn a coffee cup around three times and then turn the cup over. Let the grounds drain from the bottom of the cup onto the table. The grounds will spell out one's fortune.

35. When a person wears yellow, it signifies jealousy.

36. When a person cuts his wisdom teeth, his life is one-half over.

37. There is a pot of gold to be found at the foot of the rainbow.

38. If a turtle bites a person, it will not turn loose until it thunders.

39. Kill a snake and hang it up, its tail will wiggle until the sun goes down.

40. When a rooster crows in the morning, it is time to get up.

41. If a cow loses her cud, she will die.

42. One must not run water into the cistern during the months that have the letter "r" in them. If this is done there will be "wiggle tails" in the water.

43. Do not sweep out trash after the sun is down.

44. If a cow lows after dark, one will hear ill tidings.

45. The old people used to say if someone got into trouble, he should take the bones of a black cat and place them in a stream of water. The bones which float up the stream will be a person's luck bones, so he must save them.

46. If you sweep under a girl's feet, it is a sign that she is going to be an old maid.

47. When one makes a "bragging" statement, to ward off contradictory ill luck one should "cross" his fingers.

48. Put a limestone rock under the cookstove to keep the hogs out of the chickens.

49. When the old rooster crows near the front door, it is a sign someone is coming.

50. Put a limestone rock in the meal barrel to keep the meal fresh.

51. Crumble up smoked tobacco leaves and sprinkle among clothes to keep the moths out.

52. Pull out a gray hair and two will grow in its place.

53. Moss grows on the north side of the tree.

54. A custom of old time bread makers was to retain a bit of the old dough to knead into a batch of new dough. This is supposed to result in better bread.

55. To find out how old a horse is, one can just count his teeth.

56. When a person's nose itches, it is a sign that company is coming.

57. When an "inch worm" crawls on a person, this is a sign indicating that the person will soon possess a new garment the color of the worm.

58. Place a snail on a handkerchief and lay the handkerchief on the lawn on May Day eve. The next morning the snail will have traced the initial of the loved one on the handkerchief.

59. Walk around the wheat field at daybreak on May Day morning and one will meet his intended.

60. If one is in a bad humor during the day, it is because he got up on the wrong side of the bed.

61. If one dreams of snakes he has enemies. If he kills the snakes in his dreams, he will overcome his enemies.

62. If one's left eye itches, he will be pleased. If his right eye itches, he is going to be disappointed.

63. If one hears a screech owl "hollerin'," he should take off his shoes and set them in the window. The owl will stop "hollerin'".

64. If a person touches a tree in which there is a katy-did "hollerin'" the katy-did will hush.

65. If a person's ears burn, someone is talking about him.

66. If one washes on New Year's day that person will wash away a member of his family.

67. When fruit trees are set, mark the north side of the tree before taking it up. When the tree is reset, set it in the same direction so it will not die.

68. When the first snow comes, count the age of the moon; if it is five days old there will be that many snows.

69. If one permits a frog to urinate on him, he will get a wart.

70. An old practice for bestowing happy birthday wishes on a person consisted of two actions: (1) Paddling the person as many times as he is "years old with one to grow on." (2) Rolling the person under the bed.

71. School students used to be told that when they dropped a textbook it was a sign they would have a poor lesson.

72. If one takes up ashes on Monday, he will call the doctor before the week has passed.

73. A freckled person wanting to remove the freckles should wash the face with dew on May Day morning.

74. Sneeze before eating and see your sweetheart before sleeping.

75. Cats have nine lives.

76. If one kills a frog his cows will go dry.

77. If there is company on Monday, there will be company all the week.

78. Bubbles in tea is a sign of visitors.

79. Blisters on the tongue is a sign one has told a lie.

80. When one's ears burn, someone is talking about that person.

81. When one has cold shivers, someone is walking on the spot where his grave will be.

82. Giving a knife as a gift is a sign of cutting friendship.

83. Drop a knife and a man will come; drop a fork and a woman will come; drop a spoon and a child will come.

84. Put salt in the water used to rinse hair and the hair will not fall out.

85. When talking with an individual about another person, and the latter comes up, it is customary to say, "Talk about the devil and his image will appear."

86. Never cut the fingernails or toenails on Sunday.

87. If a person is leaving home his family should not watch the car go out of sight or harm will come to the person.

88. If one goes fishing he should spit on his bait and he will catch lots of fish.

89. If a man owning a beehive dies, the bees must be told before the sun comes up or the bees will die.

## Proverbs and Sayings

1. Everything comes out in the wash.
2. A stitch in time saves nine.
3. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
4. Just like pouring water on a duck's back.
5. You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.
6. The darkest hour is just before dawn.
7. Every cloud has a silver lining.
8. Don't kick a man while he is down.
9. A watched pot will never boil.
10. Birds of a feather flock together.
11. There are more fish in the sea; also, there are more pebbles on the beach.
12. There is someone for everyone.
13. The pasture on the other side of the fence is always greener.
14. When poverty comes in the door, love flies out the window.
15. You can't have your cake and eat it too.
16. Two is company; three is a crowd.
17. I have a bone to pick with you.
18. He could not say mush if he had a mouth full.
19. Too lazy to say "sooie" if the hogs were after him.
20. He is lower than a toad.
21. It is better to be lucky than to be rich.
22. You had better make hay while the sun shines.



## SEVEN COMIC TENNESSEE FOLKSONGS

By

George W. Boswell  
Austin Peay State College

Pending publication of the Tennessee Archives of folksongs, it has been our practice to present some of them periodically in the pages of the Bulletin. The present article departs from past procedure<sup>1</sup> in that it includes choice songs of one type only, humorous songs. A person must be solemn indeed not to receive any chuckles from the following seven songs, which have been selected from the more than eight hundred items now in the Archives.

Let us begin with a Child ballad, a variant of Child 278 which the singer knew simply as "The Old Farmer."<sup>2</sup> This isn't the longest or necessarily the best of the eight occurrences we have, but the tune has a unique swing of its own, pentachordal Ionian exhibiting what may be fancied to be Lydian influence. Information on the ballad may be found in the Brown collection.<sup>3</sup> When Peter H. Broadbent sang it June 27, 1952, he was ninety-three years of age. He was born in Trigg county, Kentucky, just across the line, but lived in Montgomery County, Tennessee.

No. 2 is a comic "Sally"<sup>4</sup> version of the oldest American ballad, "Springfield Mountain," known to the singer and him alone as "Father's Hay." This variant is selected from the seven in the Archives mostly because its tune is an example of the uncommon circular. A circular tune ends on a note other than the tonal center in every stanza except the last. W. S. Townsend, then sixty-nine years of age, sang it in Clarksville, Tennessee, March 15, 1957. He had it from his mother, who was born in Owen County, Indiana, 1850, and whose parents also lived in that area. Incidentally, Tennessee also has a rare example of a perfectly serious version of "Springfield Mountain."

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1. "Five Choice Tennessee Folksongs," XVI (1950), 25-30; "Five More Choice Tennessee Folksongs," XVI (1950), 46-53; and "Third Edition: Five Tennessee Folksongs," XVII (1951), 85-92b.

2. A title which, by the way, is unknown to Professor Coffin. See Tristram P. Coffin, The British Traditional Ballad in North America (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1950), pp. 148-150.

3. The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, II (Durham: Duke University Press, 1952), 188; IV (1957), 116-119. Henceforward referred to as Brown.

4. G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., Native American Balladry (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1950), pp. 213-214; Brown, II, 489-490.

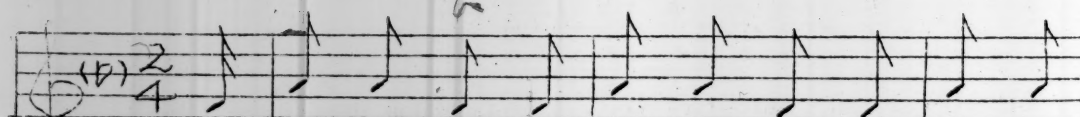
## THE OLD FARMER

There was an old far-mer, in Lon-don did dwell, He  
damned his old wife, and wished her in hell Sing flack to  
my Lou, sing fol de rol oo dum, Sing flack to my  
Lou, sing fol de rol day.

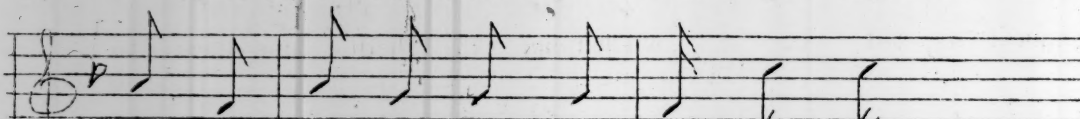
2. One day the old devil come to his plow  
Saying, "One of your family I must have now.
3. "It's neither you nor your oldest son,  
But your derved old wife, and she'll count one."
4. "You may have her with all my heart,  
And I wish much joy and may you never part."
5. He taken her down to the gates of hell,  
Saying, "Now, old lady, I'll pay you up well."
6. Four little devils come riding their chains;  
She h'ist up her foot and smashed out their brains.
7. Five little devils come peeping over the wall,  
Said, "Take her away, Daddy, she'll kill us all."
8. He taken her up all on his back,  
Like a derved old peddler went packing her back.

2.

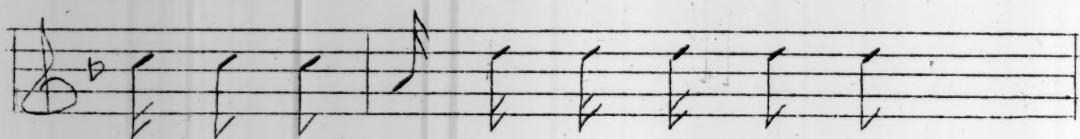
## FATHER'S HAY



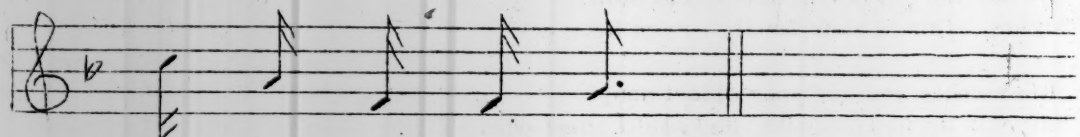
On Mon- day morn- ing he did go Down in that



mea- dow for to mow Rye tad a ling



a day, rye tad a ling a day, Rye



tad a ling a day.

2. He had not mowed half round the field  
Till a poison serpent bit him on the heel.
3. He turned around as he thought best,  
And he jumped sock-doodle in a hornets' nest.
4. "Oh, Johnny dear, what made you go  
Down in that meadow for to mow?"
5. "Oh, Sally, dear, don't you know?  
  
It's Father's hay and it must be mowed."
6. Come all young girls and drop a tear  
For this fine young man that died right here.

7. Come all young men and warning take  
And never get bit by a rattle-tum-a-snake.
- 

Let us use for No. 3 "Devilish Mary."<sup>5</sup> Of the three excellent variants available, this is selected because its tune illustrates meter variation and Mixolydian influence. Bob Rickard, who sang it in Nashville May 29, 1950, learned it from Sybil Meade of Weeksbury, Kentucky.

No 4 is "Three Jolly Welshmen," one of two variants in the collection, both with tunes. As Brown points out,<sup>6</sup> the "Reynard" song is a variant tradition of this. Music to either form of this ballad seems to be hard to come by, for Brown has none. We also have a good version of "Reynard" under the title "The Hound and the Fox," also with music. "Three Jolly Welshmen," pentatonic, was sung by Mrs. Annie Stevenson in Clarksville; January 26, 1954. She had it from her father, F. Ross McCuddy, born in Pembroke, Kentucky, in 1848.

What Paul Hyatt uniquely calls "The Rich Irish Lady" is No. 5. It appears in Brown, II, 450, as "The Old Woman's Blind Husband," an alternative form of "Johnny Sands," which is also discussed in Brown, II, 448. Professor Hyatt learned it from his mother in north Alabama, but she may have had it from her mother who was born in South Carolina about 1865. This variant was recorded in Clarksville on September 20, 1950.

The last two songs are, so far as we know, uncontaminated by print. Mrs. Nancy Priddy sang No. 6, "A Peck of Devilment," in Bowling Green, Kentucky, on June 27, 1950. She learned it from Mrs. Sallie Jane Wilson of Dog Creek, Kentucky, who was born in 1870. We select it for inclusion here because, in addition to its obvious virtues, it illustrates the employment of neutral tones at the asterisks.

No. 7, "She Comes Down a-Snappin' an' a-Snarlin'," learned probably from her father, was sung at Clarksville on February 23, 1957, by Mrs. Stevenson.

It now transpires that, embarrassingly enough, six of the foregoing seven "Tennessee" variants have been traced to four states other than Tennessee. Well, let the chips fall where they may. Perhaps these United States are bound together not least well by their common corps of folksong.

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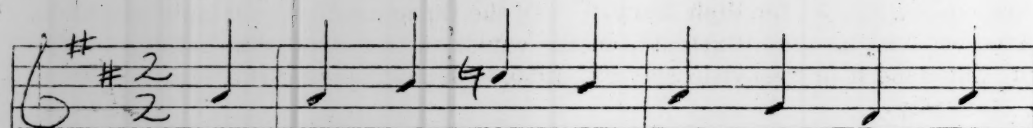
5. Brown, IV, 343-344. But it must be scarce in North Carolina.

6. II, 460-463; for another occurrence with music see John Harrington Cox, ed., Folk-Songs of the South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), pp. 478-479.

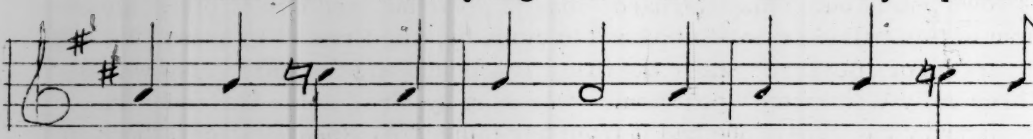


3.

# DEVILISH MARY



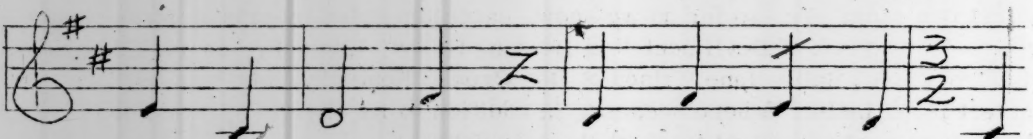
When I was young and in in my prime



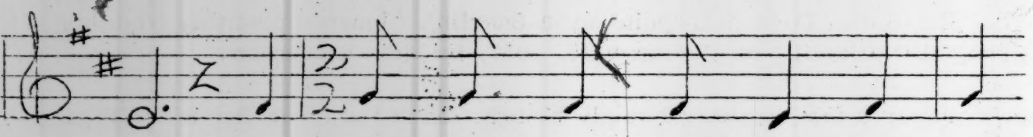
I thought I'd nev- er mar- ry. I fell in love



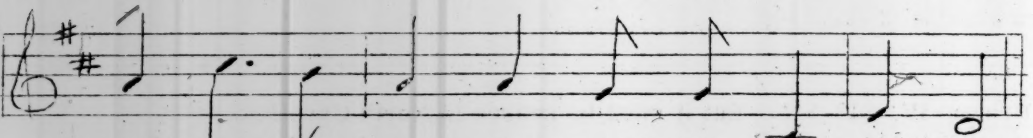
with a pret- ty lit- tle girl To the tune



of we got mar- ried Rink- tum dink- tum



tar- ry; The pret- ti- est lit- tle girl



in all the world, Her name was devil- ish Mary.

REF. Rinktum dinktum tarry;  
The prettiest little girl in all this world,  
Her name was Devilish Mary.

2. She washed my clothes in live soapsuds,  
She peeled my back with switches;  
She let me know right from the start  
That she's gonna wear my britches.
3. We hadn't been married but about two weeks,  
Decided we'd better be parted;  
She bundled her up a little bundle of clothes  
And down the road she started.
4. If ever I marry the second time  
It'll be for love nor riches.  
I'll marry a little girl about two feet tall  
So she can't wear my britches.

4. THREE JOLLY WELSHMEN

Three jol- ly, Welsh- men, and jol- ly  
boys were they, They went a- hunt- ing on  
St. Pat- rick's Day. Look a- there now!

They hunted and they whooped, and the first thing they did find  
Was a barn in a meadow, and that they left behind.  
Look a-there now!

One said it was a barn, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was a haystack with the top blown away.  
Look a-there now!

They hunted and they whooped, and the next thing they did find  
Was a frog in the well, and that they left behind.  
Look a-there now!

One said it was a frog, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was a jay-bird with his feathers washed away.  
Look a-there now!

They hunted and they whooped, and the next thing they did find  
Was a pig in the lane and that they left behind.

Look a-there now!

One said it was a pit, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was an elephant with its trunk cut away.

Look a-there now!

They hunted and they whooped and the next thing they did find  
Was a babe in the woods and that they left behind.

Look a-there now!

One said it was a babe, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was a monkey with the tail cut away.

Look a-there now!

They hunted and they whooped, and the next thing they did find  
Was the moon in the elements and that they left behind.

Look a-there now!

One said it was the moon, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was a cheese with a half cut away.

Look a-there now!

They hunted and they whooped, and the next thing they did find  
Was a woman in the kitchen and that they left behind.

Look a-there now!

One said it was a woman, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was an angel with the wings cut away.

Look a-there now!

They hunted and they whooped, and the next thing they did find  
Was an owl in an ivy bush and that they left behind.

Look a-there now!

One said it was an owl, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was the Devil, and they all ran away.

Look a-there now!



5.

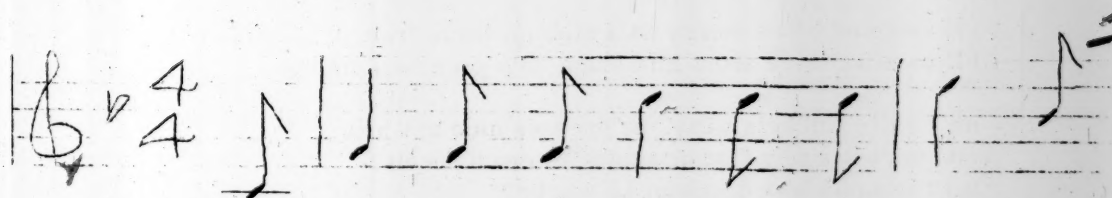
# THE RICH IRISH LADY

The musical score is written on four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a time signature of 2/2. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the staves, aligned with the notes. The lyrics are: "There was an old rich lady, In Ire-land she did dwell; She loved her old man dear-ly, But an-oth-er twice as well. Oh, dear-est, dear-est, dear-est, dear-est, Thanks, says I, What ails me and what's the mat-ter now?"

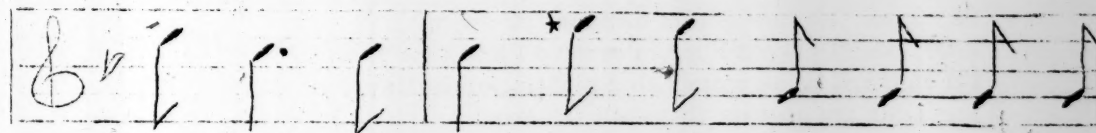
There was an old rich la- dy, In Ire- land she did  
dwell; She loved her old man dear- ly, But an- oth- er  
twice as well. Oh, dear- est, dear- est, dear- est, dear- est,  
Thanks, says I, What ails me and what's the mat- ter now?

2. She went to some doctor, to see if she could find  
Some means or another to make her husband blind.
3. She got six or seven bones and made him eat them all.  
He says, "Oh, my dearest, dear, I cannot see at all."
4. He said he'd drown himself if he could find the way;  
She said she'd go along with him for fear he'd go astray.
5. They walked along together till they came to the river shore.  
He said he wouldn't drown himself unless she'd push him o'er.
6. She stepped back a step or two and went to push him in;  
He stepped 'side a step or two, and she went headlong in.
7. She cried out, Help me! as loud as she could squall.  
He says, 'Oh, my dearest dear, I cannot see at all.'
8. The old man being excited and thinking she could swim,  
He got himself a great long pole and pushed her 'way out in.

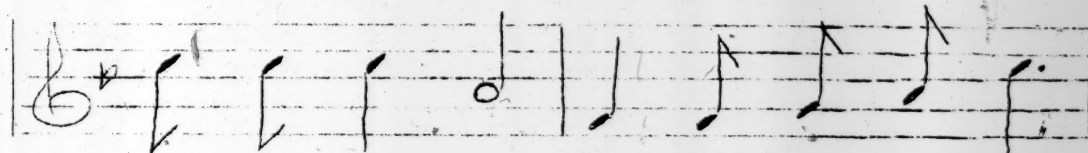
# A PECK OF DEVILMENT



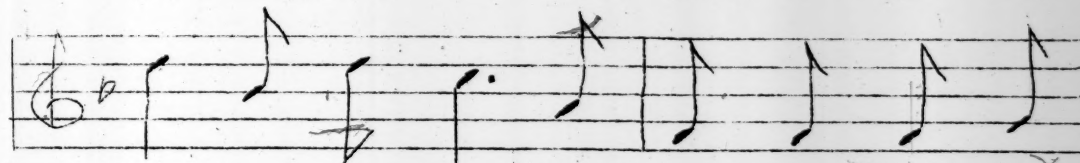
Come, all who are love-sick and cured can-



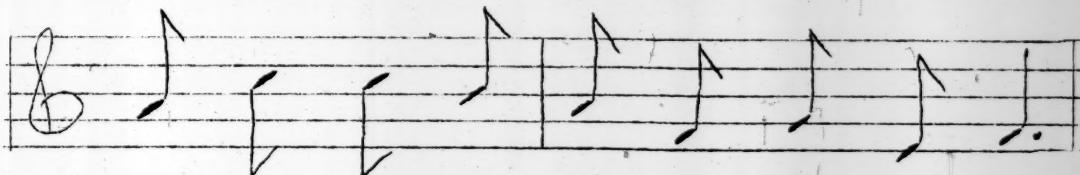
not be, I'll give you a rem-e-dy, the



one that cured me; One grain of rea-son,



two grains of sense, A pound of res-o-



lu-tion, and a peck of dev-il-ment.

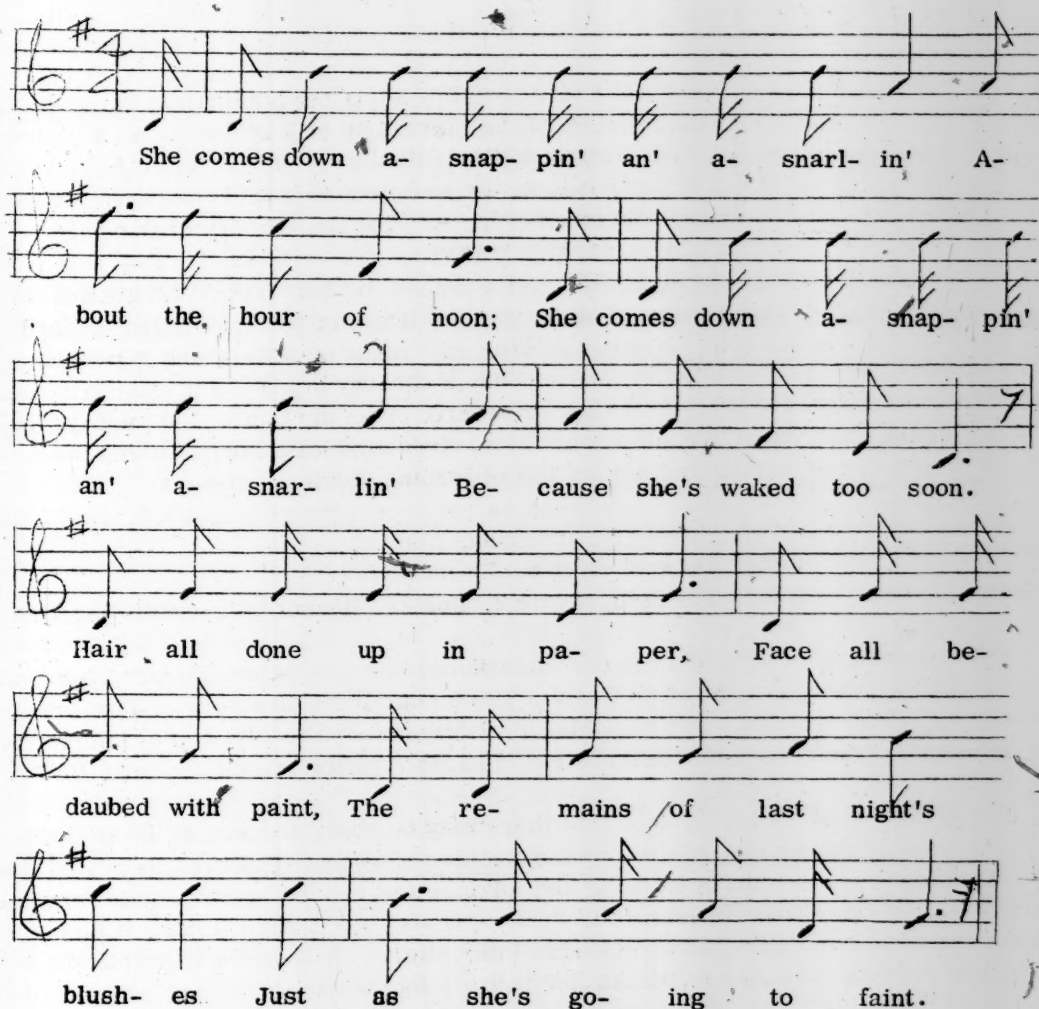
2. He's gone and he's left me, he's left me all alone,  
But he's very much mistaken if he thinks that I will mourn.

I'll sing and be as merry as a nightingale is free,  
I'll care no more about him since he's gone back on me.

3. He's little and he's witty, he dresses nice and neat,  
And isn't it a pity that he shows so much deceit?  
Isn't it a pity how deceitful he can be?  
I care no more about him since he's gone back on me.

4. He's gone, let him go; let him sink or swim.  
If he doesn't care for me, I'm sure I won't for him.  
I'll sing and be as merry as a nightingale in May,  
For I can get another that isn't far away.

SHE COMES DOWN A-SNAPPIN' AN' A-SNARLIN'



The musical score is written on six staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive, using eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes.

She comes down a- snap- pin' an' a- snarl- in' A-  
 bout the hour of noon; She comes down a- snap- pin'  
 an' a- snar- lin' Be- cause she's waked too soon.  
 Hair all done up in pa- per, Face all be-  
 daubed with paint, The re- mains of last night's  
 blush- es Just as she's go- ing to faint.

She falls in love with a fellow  
 Who sports the foreign air  
 He loves her for her money  
 And she loves him for his hair.  
 One of the very best matches,  
 Both well wedded in life--  
 She's got a fool for a husband  
 And he's got a fool for a wife.



## EVENTS AND COMMENTS

A VERY HAPPY, PRACTICAL REWARD for publication in the T.F.S. Bulletin is reported by Dr. Frank Hoadley of the University of Maryland. As a result of his article on "Folk Humor in the Novels of William Faulkner" in the September, 1957, Bulletin (XXIII, 75-82) he has been chosen as the recipient of a \$1000 research grant for further study of Faulkner. He will do much of his work at the Library of Congress.

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THREE PHOTOGRAPHS OF APPALACHIAN DULCIMERS have recently been acquired for the Index of American Design, writes Mrs. Helen Bullard Krechniak. These photographs show two instruments made by John Jacob Niles and another (a four-stringed dulcimer with yellow poplar body and ebony pegs) which was strung and pegged by Mr. Niles in 1933. Copies may be secured from the Index, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. for 75 cents each. Mrs. Krechniak also suggests that readers of the Bulletin may appreciate having a brief list of leading dulcimer makers:

Jethro Amburgey, Hindman, Kentucky  
Homer Ledford, Ivyton, Tennessee  
Edd L. Presnell, Route 2, Box 27, Banner Elk, North Carolina

Mrs. Krechniak likewise calls our attention to her very interesting and informative pamphlet on Tennessee Mountain Crafts, which contains a directory of Tennessee craftsmen and craft centers. The pamphlet is distributed by the Division of Information of the Tennessee Department of Conservation, 115 State Office Building, Nashville 3.

Mrs. Krechniak believes, too, that there may be some readers of the Bulletin who do not know of the service offered by the Archive of Folksong at the Library of Congress. Staffed by specialists in folksong and folklore and headed by Mrs. Rae Korson, the Archive gives courteous assistance to those who visit it. Within limits, it also gives helpful attention to correspondence related to folk culture. It issues a free list of recordings that may be purchased from its Recording Laboratory.

\*\*\*\*\*

SONGS OF MURDERED GIRLS (words without musical notation) make up the bulk of West Virginia Folklore, VII, 4 (Summer, 1957). The versions are those reported from West Virginia. The preceding issue (Spring, 1957) featured superstitions and stories of the supernatural found in West Virginia.

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"THE KING'S WELL," a tale of Type 577 is reported from Kentucky by Leonard Roberts in the recent issue of Mountain Life and Work (XXXIV, 1). Mr. Roberts believes this tale has not hitherto been collected in America.

\*\*\*\*\*

PROCEEDINGS of the Tenth Annual Conference of the International Folk Music Council are reported in the Council's Journal (X). Most of the papers printed deal with the structures of folk music. In its reviews and notices the Journal provides an excellent summary view of world-wide activities in the field of its special concern.

\*\*\*\*\*

FOLK POETRY of the youngest generation is represented in Nancy K. Ford's "A Garland of Playground Jingles," published in the Key stone Folklore Quarterly (II, 4).

\*\*\*\*\*

THE SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY (XXI, 4) has published the report of "A New Traditional Ballad from Virginia: 'The Whummil Bore' (Child No. 27)" by Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr. and Paul C. Worthington. The same journal presents Francis Hayes' extensive bibliography on the study of gestures. This subject obviously has its place in a consideration of folk cultures.

\*\*\*\*\*

"ROBINHOOD BALLADS IN NORTH AMERICA" are surveyed by W. E. Simeone in Midwest Folklore (VII, 4). In the same issue Jan Brunvand reports on "Norwegian-American Folklore in the Indiana University Archives."

Arthur K. Moore, The Frontier Mind. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957, \$5.00.

The Frontier Mind by Arthur K. Moore presents many facets of interest to its readers but the folklorist historian may ask about the extent to which the exploring pioneer leaves his imprint upon the successive waves of settlers and empire builders who came after.

The thesis of this research is based on the assumption that the frontiersman somehow impresses very greatly the cultural and economic patterns of behavior of successive settlements; the conclusion rather indicates that the thesis was a myth and that it is rather the legend of that myth which indirectly determines the esprit-de-corps of those who come later.

Kentucky was the site of the first trans-Appalachian settlements. The garden of the myth (valleys of fertile lands and abundant forests) was pioneered by leaders such as Daniel Boone and James Harrod. It was the "happy hunting ground" of a vast area. But these early pioneers wished to enjoy and utilize their possessions rather than to influence or regulate any future state of society or government. At first the Indians (Shawnees) did not fit into this picture. The later aristocrats were from Tidewater, Virginia, the Piedmont, or even from the Old World and became the state-builders, the landowners, and the horse-breeders of the Bluegrass State.

After a time the legend of the heroic frontiersman began to spread and the myth took hold at the various stages of settlement and occupation. It was the rifle, the ax, great endurance, and crucial judgment that marked the life of the frontiersman. He had to destroy before the pioneer could build. These frontiersmen were the tenants of the garden. Then followed the speculators and finally the business entrepreneurs who somehow tended to turn the buckskin hero of the frontier back into the legendary myth from which he emerged. "The Bluegrass planters . . . set an example of abundant living in the face of rude levelers and narrow moralists," and a remarkably high degree of cultural homogeneity has been maintained.

--E. G. Rogers

Tennessee Wesleyan College

Mody C. Boatright and others, Madstones and Twisters. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1958.

The title, taken from two separate articles, indicates the wide range of themes in this 28th annual collection by the Texas Folklore Society. The first, "Madstones and Hydrophobia Skunks," is a delightful essay by the dean of Texas folklorists, J. Frank Dobie. In what may well be called the definitive work on madstones, Dobie writes: "In pre-Pasteur days, the one hope of being saved from a malady more horrible in its manifestation than any other on earth was to get to a madstone . . . . In the way that certain old-time hard cases turned to God at the end of their power to go on sinning, some people turned to madstones; they might not believe fully, but there wasn't anything else at all to believe in." Dobie includes many case histories. The "twister" portion of the title refers to "Twister Tales" by Howard C. Key, who begins with a scientific analysis of tornados and ends with the more interesting and fantastic folk tales about them.

The second and third entries should be of interest to folklorists everywhere. "A European Folklorist Looks at American Folklore" is a lecture by Reidar Th. Christiansen, professor emeritus of folklore at the University of Oslo. His long, scholarly "look" is followed by a stimulating essay by Editor Boatright entitled "Folklore in a Literate Society." He disagrees with the idea that "a 'folk' must be a primitive group isolated from the contaminating influence of modern civilization." In a literate society many old customs persist (e.g., the wedding veil), many are corrupted (the pageantry of the tournament now used for cow or cotton festivals; "The Queen of Love and Beauty becomes the Queen of Goats") and some are lost or replaced (old crafts disappear; new ones appear, such as building hot rods). He concludes: "The processes which create folklore do not cease when a society becomes literate, . . . the folklore of any culture will reflect the values of that culture."

That careful documentation and scholarship does not detract from folklore writing is shown in well-done articles by Lanvil Gilbert, "The Prairie Dog," and Americo Paredes, "The Mexican Carrido: Its Rise and Fall." That pedantry can also creep into this unlikely field is illustrated by Elton Miles' "Ghisos Ghosts," to which an abortive note, "More Chisos Ghosts" by Riley Aiken, adds nothing.

Merely dull are the tales entered by Jim Rowden, J. D. Brantly, and Guadalupe Duarte. Less dull are the "Russell Tales" of Maurita Russell Lueg, but one indicates that family legends are often examples of "the traveling anecdote." She tells a tale which happened when her "great-grandmother was a young girl." At a party a girl says she is not afraid to go alone to a cemetery and stick a knife in a new grave. "Next morning she was found stretched across the grave, her face frozen in an expression of terror. The hem of her skirt was pinned to the grave by the knife." This same story with a blackface cast is told in Louise Hathcock's *Legends of East Texas* (1957), p. 98. By far the best of the tales is "The Adventures of Ad Lawrence" by F. S. Wade, taken from an old manuscript written about Texas in the 1820's.



"Almanac Lore" by Everett A. Gillis has been saved for last, because it suggests that "one of the least-explored sources of American folklore is the old-fashioned almanac," available in the Library of Congress or Archives of the American Antiquarian Society. From them much could be gleaned about astrological lore, frontier humor, and folk wisdom: proverbs, customs, weather sayings, superstitions. Some folklorists, perhaps in Tennessee, will take up Gillis' challenge.

---James W. Byrd  
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Rhys Carpenter, Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958. 198 pp. Paperback; \$1.50.

What possible connection can there be between the Odyssey and the tradition in our part of the world that if the groundhog casts a shadow on the second of February he must return to his barrow to sleep for another six weeks? Anyone intrigued by that question is advised to read Professor Carpenter's Gather lectures delivered at the University of California, first published in 1946 and now reissued in a paper-bound edition. A reading of the book alone can satisfy such a person's curiosity, but a brief abstract of Carpenter's chain of associations may give a notion of its nature.

The American superstition was transferred to the groundhog from the badger that German immigrants to Pennsylvania had known in their homeland. But the badger had inherited it from the bear, which had become relatively rare in Germany. The connection between these animals is not so much one of resemblance in appearance as in hibernating habits which, centuries ago, had given the bear the status of a god. Bear worship grew up around the belief that this being in winter retreated to the underworld. The springtime resurrection brought back a body whose spirit had been claimed, and it is well known that such a body should cast no shadow; if the animal did cast a shadow, it was evident he had not made the expected journey and was obviously still under obligation to do so. This explains the groundhog business.

But how does the Odyssey fit into the picture? Professor Carpenter observes that out of the religious bear cult there developed a story (widespread in northern Europe, and at least vaguely remembered in Homer's Greece) about the Bear's son, a half human hero to whom was attributed a cycle of exploits including a descent to the world of the dead. The Odyssey, like the much later Icelandic saga of Grettir and the Old English epic of Beowulf, is a bardic version of that folk tale.

This, of course, is not the whole burden of Professor Carpenter's lectures. He has also identified the (much less significant) folk story elements in the Iliad, expressed his convictions about the historical genesis of the story of the Greek Expeditionary Forces, and located the site of their Trojan campaign. He argues that the two Greek epics could not have been composed by the same bard but are separated by between fifty and a hundred years in time. He often has interesting and illuminating interpretations of particular passages in the poems.



The author of this refreshing little book was for many years Director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. He is now Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology at Bryn Mawr College.

--W. J. G.

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